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VOC FOR IOP/FN
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NEW HAMPSHIRE: COMPROMISE WITH ENVIRONMENTALISTS

ANNCR:

FROM BOSTON, VOA CORRESPONDENT WILLIAM READ HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF A CLASSICAL CONFRONTATION PITTING A GROUP OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS AGAINST ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS.

VOICE:

FOR 20 YEARS THEY'VE BEEN ARGUING IN THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE ABOUT THE BUILDING OF A SINGLE ROAD. IT ALL BEGAN BACK IN THE 1950S IN THE HEYDAY OF THE FEDERAL PROGRAM TO CRISSCROSS AMERICA WITH SUPER HIGHWAYS. OVER 60 THOUSAND KILOMETERS WERE TO BE BUILT, INCLUDING A NORTH-SOUTH ARTERY LINKING BOSTON, THE NATION'S 13TH LARGEST CITY, WITH CANADA.

SINCE NEARLY ALL OF THE ROADWAY WOULD RUN THROUGH NEW HAMPSHIRE, THAT STATE WAS EXPECTED TO BENEFIT SUBSTANTIALLY. AND, IN FACT, THE FIRST SECTION OF THE HIGHWAY IS SAID TO HAVE MADE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

PROPONENTS OF THE HIGHWAY HAVE CONTENDED THAT THE ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED NORTHERN HALF OF THE STATE, UP TOWARD THE CANADIAN BORDER, WOULD EXPERIENCE A SIMILAR BOOM ONCE THE NEXT SECTION OF ROADWAY WAS CONSTRUCTED. BUT SINCE 1957 THE BUILDERS HAVE BEEN STYMIED BY ENVIRONMENTALISTS.

AT THE HEART OF THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS IS WHETHER A SUPER HIGHWAY SHOULD RUN THROUGH NEW HAMPSHIRE'S FRANCONIA NOTCH STATE PARK. SITUATED IN THE MIDST OF THE WHITE MOUNTAINS, THE PARK IS A NATURAL WONDERLAND OF SHARP CLIFFS, LAKES, AND FORESTS. OVERSEEING ALL THIS RUGGED BEAUTY IS THE "OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN," AN IMPRESSIVE GEOLOGICAL

FERMATION OF GRAY ROCK IN WHICH RAIN AND WIND HAVE CARVED THE FEATURES OF A HUMAN HEAD.

THE URGE TO PROTECT THIS AESTHETIC ASSEST AND THE SURROUNDING NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IS STRONG -- TO SOME, COMPELLING -- IN A COUNTRY THAT STEADILY HAS BECOME URBANIZED. YET, NO ONE TODAY, PARTICULARLY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE RECENT RECESSION, WOULD DOUBT THE IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR NORTHERN NEW HAMPHSIRE.

NOW, THE 20-YEAR-LONG DISPUTE HAS BEEN SETTLED BY COMPROMISE. A PLAN HAS BEEN WORKED OUT WHEREBY A FOUR-LANE SUPER HIGHWAY WOULD BE SCALED DOWN AS IT ENTERS THE PARK. IN THE SECTION WHERE IT PASSES UNDER THE VIEW OF THE "OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN," IT WOULD BE MERELY AN UPGRADED VERSION OF AN EXISTING TWO-LANE ROAD.

THIS COMPROMISE SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT CHANGING ATTITUDES IN THE UNITED STATES TOWARD THE OFTEN COMPETING VALUES OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. IT SAYS THAT BALANCED SOLUTIONS ARE POSSIBLE, ALTHOUGH, AS IN THIS CASE, THEY MAY BE A LONG TIME COMING.

JS/PY